= Chapter 1 =

Introduction

In 1993, when UCLA's historic Powell Library was being retrofitted to meet stricter earthquake codes, workers found numerous dusty boxes hidden behind a bookshelf in an unused basement room. The boxes contained the original survey questionnaires taken in 1965 and 1966 that were used to inform Leo Grebler, Joan Moore, and Ralph Guzmán's *The Mexican American People: The Nation's Second Largest Minority,* published in 1970. This path-breaking study had accompanied the national discovery of Mexican Americans, which, they claim, began in 1960 with the presidential campaign of John F. Kennedy. Based on random samples of Mexican Americans in Los Angeles County and San Antonio City, their study concluded that though some sectors of the Mexican American population had entered the middle class and begun to participate in American society, there was still little overall assimilation, even for those who had lived in the United States for several generations.[1]

Library staff soon brought these questionnaires and other project materials to our attention. Sensing a unique opportunity, we seized on the idea of revisiting the original respondents. We sensed that Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán's survey could once again be important if we could examine the lives of the original respondents some three decades later and thus create a longitudinal study. In addition, we thought to make this genuinely intergenerational by interviewing the children of the original respondents, who would now be well into adulthood. This kind of follow-up study would require substantial detective work to find the survivors and a sample of their children, both of whom we knew would be scattered not only throughout California and Texas but also beyond. Several years later, with generous funding from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and several foundations as well as the assistance of many energetic graduate students, we were able to locate and interview 684 of the nearly 1,200 respondents who were younger than fifty in the original survey (nearly 60 percent) and 758 of their children.

We believe that this truly longitudinal and intergenerational design would be especially well-suited to address current debates about the

integration of immigrants and their descendants in American society. We were able to design a research study that addresses conceptual and methodological issues that arise in intergenerational and longitudinal research and ethnic integration generally. These include the problems of interviewing respondents who might be so highly assimilated that they no longer identify with the group, tracking intergenerational change with cross-sectional data, and selectivity due to respondent loss over time. Our survey examines a randomly selected sample of persons who identified themselves as Mexican Americans in 1965 and follows them and their children some thirty-five years later, regardless of how they identified in 2000. In other words, our research design allows sampling without an ethnic bias. It also permits investigating actual intergenerational change from adult parents to their adult children a generation later, overcoming the problem of comparing generations with cross-sectional data. Finally, to overcome the loss of respondents over time, we are able to adjust our follow-up data to reflect the entire original random sample, using information from the 1965 survey questionnaires.

In this book, we carefully examine the historical and intergenerational trends along several dimensions used to measure the integration of ethnic groups, as well as several factors that may shape these trends. We investigate the trajectory of integration along the dimensions of education, socioeconomic status, exposure to other groups, language, ethnic identity, and political participation. We look for factors that shape the integration trajectory, including generation, education, household characteristics, and urban and neighborhood contexts. As far as we know, this is the only study of its kind.

Background on the Original Study

Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán's study sought to systematically address the huge gaps in knowledge about "the nation's second largest minority" of the time.[2] It evaluated the condition of the Mexican American population using a 1965 to 1966 household survey of Los Angeles and San Antonio as well as the 1960 U.S. Census information on "white persons of Spanish surname" in the five southwestern states of Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. Before "The Mexican American People," the major scholarly work on Mexican Americans was ethnographic and based in rural settings. It generally described the population as almost entirely poor, trapped in their backward cultural traditions, and unassimilable.[3] The 1970 study instead focused on cities, where by then most Mexican Americans resided, and concluded that some had entered the middle class and become part of urban American society. On the other hand, the authors found "astonishingly little collective assimilation" among those tracing their origins to the American Southwest in the former Mexican territories of the nineteenth century.

The 5 million Mexican Americans were hardly known outside the five southwestern states in the 1960s, but with massive immigration since then, the Mexican origin population has roughly tripled in size and dispersed beyond the Southwest. Mexicans have become the leading immigrant group in the United States by far. Most research on Mexican Americans fails to make the important distinctions between immigrants, their children, and later generations-since-immigration. Statistics frequently presented for the Mexican American population are swamped by large numbers of immigrants among the population. For example, the low educational levels frequently include immigrants who were schooled in Mexico, where average education is fewer than nine years. Thus, research on Mexican immigrants arriving before 1970 and their descendants has largely escaped the scrutiny of careful empirical analysis.

Indeed, it seems that many Americans still do not know much of this population and often assume that Mexican Americans or Latinos in general are nearly all immigrants and their children. This has permitted pundits to characterize Mexican Americans as immigrants and make facile analogies to other groups. Most notable is the experience of European and especially Italian Americans, whose forebears were the largest immigrant group a century ago and entered the lower ranks of Americans society, and who eventually succeeded in assimilating to the white American mainstream.[4] Analogies to Italians assume that the structural conditions Italians and Mexicans, who also immigrated in the early twentieth century, faced were similar. However, the historical evidence suggests otherwise. Immigrant Italians may have faced discrimination, but their descendants experienced notably less. The children and grandchildren of Italian immigrants were integrated into the thriving economies of the Northeast and Midwest. Second- and third-generation Mexican Americans, on the other hand, were often classified as nonwhite, faced egregious discrimination and segregation, and worked in segmented and less-developed labor markets in the Southwest.

On beginning our follow-up survey, we became more convinced of its potential usefulness as we read the arguments of Washington-based policy analysts that Mexican American immigrants had become much like their turn-of-the-century European counterparts.[5] These analysts took issue with the civil rights protections that Mexican Americans gained in the 1960s (along with African Americans), claiming that Mexican American leaders sought victim status simply to be included in affirmative action policies. Affirmative action, the analysts continued, proved detrimental to Mexican Americans generally, who would have become upwardly mobile anyway and could have become so without having to bear the stigma that their mobility was attributable to affirmative action. These positions contrasted with a formerly racialist position espoused mostly by insiders and a few outsider social scientists. These scholars argued that racism has

been the greatest impediment to the progress of Mexican Americans.[6] Unfortunately, the evidence for both schools of thought has been woefully incomplete.

However, forty years after the Civil Rights Act and the end of the most egregious types of segregation and discrimination, and as the children of the recent wave of Mexican immigrants are coming of age, the question of Mexican American assimilation has returned. Do racial discrimination and an overall system of racism continue to be a major force in determining how Mexican Americans are integrated in American society or is it wearing away in this new era? William Julius Wilson has argued that race is declining in significance for African Americans.[7] According to him, the fortunes of children today are determined less by the color of their skin than by their structural or class position in society. Based on the historical and sociological evidence, we also believe that the fairly rigid racial system of the Southwest, with all its economic, political, and social implications that had been the major impediment to Mexican American progress before 1970, has decreased. Does this mean that Mexican Americans have a chance to assimilate like the descendants of European immigrants did?

Our Study in the Context of an Emerging Debate

Since we began this survey more than ten years ago, an academic debate has emerged about the future the children of today's many immigrants face. The case of Mexicans has taken a prominent place in the debate because today's immigrants, unlike their predecessors a century ago, hail predominantly from Latin American and Asia. The intergenerational integration of these immigrants has come to again occupy a central place in American sociology. Theoretical debates about the importance or nature of assimilation have re-emerged, but with a decidedly more empirical bent. In particular, two book-length studies have become prominent.[8] As the largest group in the new immigration, Mexicans have become a litmus test for the assimilation prospects of the new immigration. With the experience of new mass immigration already twenty some years behind us, immigration scholars have mostly speculated about the sociological outcomes expected for the new second generation. However, because the oldest of these children are only now entering adulthood and gaining a foothold in the labor market, it is still a bit early to analyze outcomes such as occupation, intermarriage, and adult identity, though at least one study has begun to provide some early evidence on the possibilities. Examining the adolescent children of immigrants in San Diego County,[9] Alejandro Portes and Rubén Rumbaut's *Legacies: The Story of the Second Immigration Generation*[10] comes to especially pessimistic conclusions about the children of Mexican immigrants, who they expect will experience

downward assimilation. The authors maintain that Mexican Americans have little hope of entering the middle class and a large number resolutely identify as Mexican. Instead of becoming like the assimilating Italian Americans, Portes and Rumbaut predict that they will become more like the stigmatized African Americans.

By contrast, Richard Alba and Victor Nee, in their *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration*,[11] have tried to resurrect the assimilation model, albeit a more nuanced version. They are guarded in their interpretations of the Mexican American experience, primarily because of evidence of poor progress by the third generation, but think that Mexican Americans and the descendants of today's Latin American and Asian immigrants will eventually assimilate, much like earlier European immigrants, and that the social boundaries between groups will for the most part disappear. Although they recognize race as a formidable impediment to successful integration in American society, they believe it is surmountable.

We believe the experiences of the Mexican American population are likely to be mixed rather than unambiguously assimilated or racialized. Some may do well and more or less blend into mainstream society. Others will not. We know little about the variation in outcomes and even less about what factors best determine outcomes. We see a complex sociological puzzle that needs to be sorted out through careful empirical analysis. That puzzle became apparent to us in at least one incident in our early fieldwork. In the exploratory stages of the search process in 1996, we visited the 1965 and 1966 addresses of the original survey respondents. Although we later discovered that this was an inefficient way to locate respondents, we gathered some insights about variations in integration outcomes and the extent of change over thirty years.

During an exploratory trip into the field, we searched for a Gerardo Loya (not his real name) in a poor and traditionally Mexican neighborhood. We began to ask neighbors if they had any inkling about his whereabouts. One such neighbor was Susie Estrada (not her real name), who was born in the United States, had lived next door since the original survey, and remembered Mr. Loya fondly. She claimed that he had moved away about twenty years ago and said she had no idea where he had moved. Ms. Estrada remained in the neighborhood near her brothers and was both unemployed and a single mother. Judging from her appearance and language, she was apparently associated with a cholo (gang) lifestyle—all symptoms of what W. J. Wilson called the underclass. A couple of months later, we located Gerardo Loya through voter registration files. He informed us that he had since moved to a largely white suburban neighborhood and that his eighteen-year-old daughter was about to begin college at Harvard University. The contrast in outcomes was striking. What factors might account for it: differences in education,

parental involvement, immigrant status, the move to the second neighborhood, some combination of these, or something else altogether?

Moreover, what role did their ethnic identities play? Did Mr. Loya, who was an immigrant, come to see himself as Hispanic or American after his move? How did Ms. Loya see herself? Did she speak Spanish, English, or both? If either was bilingual, how fluent were they and in what circumstances did they prefer to speak which language? How did their respective experiences shape their identities? Did they experience discrimination? How did they feel about whites or blacks? How did they feel about the current state of immigration? What were their orientations in American politics? How widespread and generalizable are their respective experiences?

We are interested in describing, first, the patterns of integration for Mexican immigrants and their descendants. To what extent are these different from the dominant explanations of immigrant or ethnic integration in the United States? What are the contours of Mexican American integration and what explains deviations from European or African patterns? How do these patterns vary across social dimensions such as education, economic status, language, residential isolation, and ethnic identity? Do these dimensions proceed at the same pace and in the same direction? How are these dimensions related to one another? To what extent is racial discrimination a factor? We are also interested in variation within the Mexican American population. Are such differences patterned consistently by variables such as urban context or skin color? Who are the most successful Mexican Americans? How is success transmitted across generations? What has changed between 1965 and 2000? Is ethnic retention a more likely outcome on some dimensions for Mexican Americans with particular characteristics? How does the low education of the immigrant generation affect the assimilation of their descendants? Finally, what does this say about our theories of race and ethnicity? In a nutshell, our evidence does point to some optimism in the sense that economic assimilation has improved over the course of the twentieth century, though later generation Mexican Americans—whose grandparents, great-grandparents or earlier were Mexican nationals—continue to lag economically behind Americans of European descent.

Before proceeding, a comment on our terminology for various groups is appropriate. We use the terms Anglo, European American, and non-Hispanic white synonymously. In popular parlance, Anglo has been the term most commonly used by Mexican Americans although the simple term white is sometimes also commonly used. However, some Mexican Americans also consider themselves white, which adds to the popularity of the term Anglo, despite its obvious imprecision. Moreover, scholars writing on Mexican American history have used Anglo extensively. The U.S. Census has used a more precise but clumsy and rarely used term, non-Hispanic white, which we sometimes use especially in reference to

demographic statistics. We refer to the population we study as Mexican American because it is the preferred term by that population, it captures the expected integration path from Mexican to American, which is the main focus of this book, and it is consistent with terms used for other ethnic groups, including African Americans and various groups of European Americans. The term Chicano refers to the same population which we use mostly to refer to Chicano history, the Chicano movement, and institutions with that name. The terms Hispanic and Latino are also used synonymously to refer to the larger population of Spanish or Latin American descent, which includes but is not limited to persons of Mexican origin. We recognize that Hispanic and Latino do not always refer to exactly the same populations but for the intents and purposes of this study, they are roughly the same.

No Americano Dream

In 2004, as we were getting ready to write this book, along came Samuel P. Huntington, a prominent Harvard professor and former coordinator of security planning for the National Security Council during the Reagan administration, with *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America's National Identity.* Using an argument stressing ethnic identification that was reminiscent of his (also) polemic book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (1996), in which he predicts that mostly religious identities will determine the new phase of global politics and conflicts, Huntington argues that Hispanics and especially Mexicans pose a threat to American national unity and their large presence in the Southwest "blurs the border between Mexico and America." With his highly selective use of often anecdotal evidence, Huntington concludes that "Mexicans and their progeny have not assimilated into American society as other immigrants did in the past and as many other immigrants are doing now." He goes on to claim that the "unassimilable" Mexicans along with the large numbers of mostly illegal immigrants are leading to a demographic reconquista of the American Southwest. Huntington further concludes by saying that Mexicans lag on every indicator of assimilation and thus calls for a massive reduction in Mexican immigration: "There is no Americano Dream. There is only the American Dream created by an Anglo Protestant society. Mexican Americans will share in that dream and in that society only if they dream in English."[12]

Failing to use basic social science principles, Huntington, at best, only further muddies any understanding of Mexican immigrant integration. For example, he is quite misinformed about the tremendous body of research on the economic and fiscal impacts of immigration, the history of Mexican Americans or Mexican immigration to the United States, and

how diverse immigrant groups have affected American culture and politics.[13] The cited passage also suggests that he does not know that virtually all Mexican Americans are fluent in English by the second generation. However, given his prominence as a social scientist and his high profile in Republican administration policy circles, Huntington has strongly fanned the flames of anti-Mexican nativism. The American public and policy makers are likely to take his opinions very seriously, especially given that these often fit with their own commonsense notions.[14]

Huntington's remarks have closely paralleled and reinforced a renewed immigration debate in the Unites States Congress and American society generally. In 2006, Congress sought to pass a major immigration reform bill in response to public pressures, including those by border vigilantes, to reduce illegal immigration and build up border enforcement. However, Congress deadlocked between a Senate bill to grant amnesty to millions of undocumented workers and a House resolution to deny amnesty, enforce employer sanctions, and wall-off large sections of the United States-Mexico border. In response to the drastic measures proposed in the House of Representatives, millions protested in several cities between March and May 2006. At a single march in downtown Los Angeles, for example, half a million marchers, largely immigrants, rallied in protest. The debate continued in 2007 with little resolution except to further extend the border wall.

Our Study Design

We hope to provide a sober analysis based on systematic and well-grounded evidence. We take an empirically based and multidimensional approach to examining the multigenerational status of Mexican Americans, using our unique intergenerational and longitudinal data, which we have compiled over the past decade. Specifically, we follow the original respondents from the 1965 interview and re-interview a random sample of them and their children, regardless of where they moved. We believe that our data allow us to overcome many of the biases in data used to study Mexican Americans or, for that matter, other ethnic groups. Furthermore, we have new data to more fully address competing hypotheses. Our intergenerational design overcomes many of the deficiencies of previous data that are unable to examine true change between parents and children. The data set is large enough for systematic statistical analysis, is based on random samples of two quite distinct metropolitan areas, and has questions appropriate to studying ethnic retention and change.

With our unique study design, we explore sociological indicators, such as economic status and language use, to describe the extent to which the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of immigrants (or descendants of the pre-1848 Mexican settlers in formerly Mexican territory) have been

integrated into American society. To what extent have they taken on the cultural or social traits of the American mainstream? Have they assimilated or do they continue to hold low status positions, speak their native language, or see themselves more as foreigners or ethnics than Americans? The answer may lie somewhere between the experience of blacks and whites or it may point to a trajectory quite unlike either group. We believe, as Alba and Nee do, that not all immigrants and their descendants will be integrated into American society to the same extent and at the same rate.[15] We also believe that integration will not always be linear and toward assimilation and that it will be affected by various characteristics or contingencies. Race, place, and human capital are only some of the contingencies that shape the integration of different groups and for individuals within groups.

Our study extends Grebler, Moore, and Guzmán's by thirty-five years, just more than the average generation,[16] which allows us to track the progress of this population. With a sizable adult population in the United States for at least four generations, it seems that a compelling test of successful integration is now possible. As important, these thirty-five years represent the end of legal segregation and egregiously discriminatory laws and policies that had directly impeded progress. We have also benefited from great strides in social science methodologies since the 1970 volume. In particular, we integrate social statistics and longitudinal methods into our analysis. We review these methods in chapter 3. Moreover, the social history of the American West and Southwest, the context of our study, has blossomed in recent decades and provides important information used to set up appropriate hypotheses. We review that history in chapter 4. Finally, several new theoretical developments, related to understanding status attainment and how the large new wave of immigrants is becoming American, have been proposed since the 1960s. We cover these in chapter 2.

Disentangling generation-since-immigration from historical or family generations is an important part of our analysis. For Mexicans, constant immigration throughout the twentieth century has led to repeated first generations throughout the twentieth century, each of which has spawned later generations. Consequently, by the late twentieth century, Mexican Americans of four (or more) different generations-since-immigration intermarry, live together, interact, and, often share a common ethnic identity. This makes the Mexican case quite unlike the European experience on which assimilation theory is modeled. Generational change occurs over time or family generations but, at the same time, each period has families with various numbers of generations removed from the immigration generation. These two conceptions of generation have been treated as equivalents in the past because of the European experience in which mass immigration was followed by a hiatus.

For many European ethnics in the United States, the immigration experience often occurred in a very short time frame, and the descendants of these immigrants at a particular point in time thus tended to be similarly distant from the experience. Family or historical generation and generation-since-immigration were tightly linked. Because previous analyses have generally focused on European immigrants, the Mexican pattern of ongoing immigration—which is likely to become a more common pattern—has eluded previous scholars of assimilation. Most Italians, for example, came to the United States from 1900 to 1915, so that cohorts of Italian Americans in any particular period were generally of the same generation-since-immigration. That is, a cross-section of young adults of Italian origin in 1910 were typically immigrants, in 1940 were second generation, and by 1970 were third generation or more. Thus, each generation-since-immigration tended to experience similar historical events. The New Deal and the early labor movement, which were critical for successful integration,[17] for example, were limited largely to second-generation descendants. By contrast, in studying Mexican Americans, it is important to disentangle family generational status from generation-since-immigration to understand their integration experiences. Both types of generations must be understood to present a full picture of the Mexican American integration process.

In sum, our goal is to investigate the intergenerational integration of the Mexican origin population into American society during the second half of the twentieth century. We ask whether the cultural, economic, and political characteristics of Mexican Americans change in any patterned way the longer families have been in the United States. We take the generational approach that has become the sociological standard for understanding immigrant integration. Our primary stratifying variables are therefore generations over time (family generations) and since immigration. As explained earlier, we divide generation into historical or family generations and generations-since-immigration, which have been largely confounded in the academic literature. We also examine variations in integration among members of this population, differentiated not only by generation but also by other variables, including urban context, parental background, and skin color. This book thus takes a very long view of immigrant integration, investigating the effects of four generations or more of residence in the United States. Ultimately, then, this is a story that is more than a century long, in which fourth-generation persons are unlikely to have ever known their immigrant great-grandparents, who were often Mexican nationals.

Why Study Mexicans?

As a wide variety of scholars—from the most nationalist of Chicano historians to nativists like Huntington—have noted, no other ethnic group in the United States has had the same relation with its origin country. Through

ideas of race and manifest destiny, the United States appropriated nearly half of Mexican territory in 1848 following the Mexican-American War and that history has shaped subsequent relations between the two countries and arguably the social and economic position of Mexicans in the United States. This conquest and "annexation" subsequently set the stage for a tension-filled relationship between the two countries. Since then, Mexicans have become the largest immigrant group in American history and the largest contemporary immigrant group.[18] United States immigration policies have long treated Mexican immigration in a distinct manner, largely in response to economic interests that have long relied on this large, low-skilled labor pool. These policies have led to the creation of an undocumented status category of workers, the so-called illegal, which has produced an especially exploitable labor pool since the 1930s.[19] This has major implications for Mexican American integration into American society.

A shared 2,000-mile land border and starkly contrasting levels of development have long made immigration to the United States attractive to the Mexican poor. Along with a history of conquest and the geographic proximity of Mexico, this low-skilled and continuous immigration has shaped American images of Mexicans as well as the experiences, collective memory, and self-image of Mexican Americans. The century-long immigration, preceded by conquest and an additional sixty years of low intensity circular immigration,[20] is unlike that of any other ethnic group in the United States. Among other things, it has resulted in a large and multigenerational presence in the United States. Those identifying as Mexican origin in the 2000 census constituted 28 percent of the population in the five southwestern states.[21] The ethnic dominance of a single group in the Southwest is quite unlike the East and Midwest of a century ago, which was characterized by multiple national groups of European immigrants, whose mass movement had mostly halted by the 1920s.

Another justification for studying Mexican Americans is their wide internal variation. This heterogeneity helps us explain why some may assimilate more than others. Theories that explain why some national groups are slower to move up the occupational ladder or shed their ethnic identities and behaviors generally ignore such internal variation and thus may be of limited value. The Mexican American experience covers a broad range—from growing up and living in segregated barrios to mostly white suburbs, from unskilled manual worker to professional, from Spanish monolingual to English monolingual, from identification as Mexicano to American, from recent immigrant to descendant of Spanish land-grant families, and from light skin with blue eyes to dark brown skin with Indian features. By examining the relationships of these variables to such outcomes as ethnic identity, language use, and education, we can begin to understand which factors might best explain different rates and paths of assimilation.

Finally, given the media attention to Hispanics or Latinos in recent years as they have become the largest minority, we should explain our focus on Mexicans. We hesitate to conflate them and generalize about their presumed pan-ethnic experience, as is fashionable today, even though there are some similarities between Mexicans and other Hispanics. For one, the public's recognition and treatment of them seems to often be the same. The unique histories, culture, and immigration contexts of each group need to be understood, however. We believe that this is especially true for Mexicans.

First, as we have noted, the historical depth and demographic size of the Mexican population is unlike any other national group from Latin America. Second, the circumstances of Mexican immigration are unique. We note that Puerto Ricans are American citizens before their migration, which began only in the 1930s. Cubans have been largely middle class and were given refugee status since they began arriving in large numbers in the 1960s. Based on the evidence thus far, the descendants of Puerto Ricans seem to have been racialized, whereas Cuban-Americans have been more successfully assimilated.[22] Other groups—such as Salvadorans and Guatemalans—may be more like Mexicans in that they are labor migrants but their immigration is only recent and considerably smaller. Still others, like Dominicans, are also relatively recent and mostly labor migrants but often experience racialization as blacks.

Finally, whether Hispanics can be considered a single ethnic group is itself questionable given that few prefer to identify that way[23] and that there are also large differences culturally, racially, and otherwise.[24] On the other hand, Latinos or Hispanics have been collectively categorized and often racialized as such in the American mind. The fate and image of Mexican Americans, who comprise 62 percent of all Latinos, is often generalized to other Latinos, and vice versa. Certainly, in the American Southwest, at least, other Latinos are often perceived, labeled, and perhaps treated as Mexicans. The historical stigma of being Mexican is thus often pinned on persons from Latin America generally. In this study, we do not make arguments about the racialization or assimilation of non-Mexican Latinos but do not deny the implications of the Mexican American experience and similarities for other groups.

Race and Ethnicity in American Sociology

Although we seek to track the particular situation of Mexican Americans in the latter third of the twentieth century, our study has implications for understanding race and ethnicity in general. The area of race and ethnicity has long occupied center stage in American sociology as researchers throughout the twentieth century have sought to understand how immigrant, racial, or ethnic groups are integrated into the host society. Since the field's inception, American sociologists, based mostly in the Northeast and Midwest, have been largely concerned with the social dynamics of immi-

gration and race and ethnic relations in the rapidly changing cities around them. They have sought to understand how European immigrant groups and their descendants, through an often competitive and intergenerational process, were able to eventually become fully or nearly fully American. In contrast, many also became concerned that a phenotypically distinct group—African Americans—seemed unable to assimilate. Some analysts thus began to study how racism and racial discrimination limited the life chances of some Americans and prevented them from receiving the full benefits of American citizenship. This dual American experience of assimilating European Americans versus excluded African Americans in Midwest and Eastern cities therefore became the dominant models for understanding race and ethnicity in America. These models still dominate today.

Certainly, those of European and African origin comprised the vast majority of Americans until the 1970s, though there have long been significant numbers of Mexicans and Asians, not to mention the once-predominant Native Americans. However, these groups were generally concentrated in the West, far from the Midwest and Eastern social laboratories that most American sociologists found in the cities around them. It was only with large-scale immigration of Asians and Latinos since the 1970s that mainstream American sociology became concerned with the integration experience of other groups of Americans. Immigration from Latin America and Asia would also become more geographically dispersed. By then, major universities had also emerged throughout the United States and research had become increasingly national in scope.

In recent years, a lively debate has ensued about the future of these new immigrants and their descendants, but unfortunately it has formed around the classic divisions of assimilation versus the persistence of race cast by the sociologists of the earlier era. Although some expect that Latinos and Asians may assimilate like the Europeans before them,[25] others expect that the traditional racial categories of white and nonwhite, the latter would include Asians and Latinos along with blacks, will continue to predict their experiences in American society.[26] On the other hand, the multigenerational outcomes of the descendants of immigrants from Asia and Latin America may fall somewhere on a relational continuum between African Americans on one end and the assimilated European Americans on the other.[27] Still another possibility is that the experience of immigrants and their descendants will vary across the white-black spectrum according to national group or perhaps according to still other characteristics.

A global perspective on race and ethnicity will reveal that European American assimilation and African American racialization are not the only two possible outcomes in plural societies. The nature of race and ethnicity in diverse contexts extends well beyond the framework provided by mainstream American sociology. Blacks and mixed race people in Brazil, for example, are largely assimilated in terms of marriage, residential integration, and feeling part of the Brazilian nation, but are mostly

excluded in education and the labor market.[28] This is distinct from the experience of the descendants of African slaves in the United States. The Roma in Central Europe, though often physically indistinguishable from other Europeans or gadje, are often stigmatized as poor and petty criminals. In most historical periods, they have been excluded from formal employment, though during the socialist period, they were fully employed.[29] Koreans in Japan are yet another example.[30] To take an extreme case, Jews became explicitly and fully racialized in Nazi Germany and were nearly exterminated on the basis of their ethnicity or race.[31]

These and many other examples show that race and ethnicity have many more manifestations than the two dominant American perspectives can account for. For one, racial exclusion and assimilation often coexist. Additionally, race is often based on perceived cultural differences, rather than merely on phenotype. Moreover, the intensity of exclusionary experiences based on race or ethnicity may vary over time or across geographies, as the cited examples have shown. Indeed, the national context, social institutions, and attitudes about immigration affect ethnic integration, as the case of Moroccan and Turkish persons in European countries reveals.[32] These variations show that historical, political, economic, and ideological contexts or circumstances have shaped the nature of race and ethnicity in numerous ways.[33]

Even though it is an American experience, the case of Mexican Americans also does not seem to fit well into either of the two dominant race and ethnic paradigms in American sociology. The reason often implicit in the literature is that they, like many other non-European immigrants, are recent arrivals and thus we can only speculate on their intergenerational experience. The empirical verdict for the integration of the new (post-1965) immigration is not yet in because the oldest U.S.-born children of immigrants in this wave are barely still young adults. These speculations are—somewhat surprisingly—made despite the fact that some of these groups predated the new immigration, sometimes by as much as a century or more. Mexicans in the United States, like Africans and Europeans, have had multiple generation experiences. Mexican Americans have had a significant presence in the United States throughout the twentieth century, and well before. As we will show, that pathway is one that features a multigenerational persistence of ethnicity that combines elements of the assimilation and the persistence-of-race paradigms, but contains other unique elements as well.

Assimilation and Racialization

Assimilation and racialization have both been used to describe how American society has integrated those of Mexican origin. In popular conversations, both race and assimilation commonly describe Mexican

Americans, but those terms are often both ambiguously and unevenly used, and not based on evidence to support the various arguments. Instead, we focus on sociological definitions of the terms and examine the extent to which these concepts might apply based on systematic examination of hard evidence. By assimilation, we do not refer to the often desired but contentious goals set by some, better referred to as assimilationism. Instead, assimilation refers to the actual social process by which immigrants and their descendants may become integrated with and more like members of the host society through prolonged exposure and socialization to them and their institutions. There are several versions of assimilation theory, which we review in chapter 2. Assimilation often occurs whether or not those affected or anyone else wants them to. Assimilation would seem to be a reasonable expectation especially in a society like the United States, with its characteristically strong institutions (such as a formal democracy), public education, and its mass consumerism and culture, which all arguably promote homogeneity. However, the strong force of assimilation in American society may be slowed or even halted by the counterforce of racialization. Racialization may act to maintain or strengthen ethnic boundaries despite the forces of assimilation.

Like assimilation, racialization—designating people by race, thus implying their position in a social hierarchy—is also a sociological process. The idea of race was once based in biology and assumed that the human species could be subdivided into races, and that intelligence and other characteristics could be ranked on the basis of race. Today, race no longer has scientific validity, but society continues to commonly sort people into racial categories, according to assumed physical, ancestral, or cultural characteristics. Racialization creates images or stereotypes about people that are used to evaluate them and thus to guide social interactions with them.[34] The idea of racialization as a process is also useful because it recognizes that these categories and placement in them change over time and across societies.

Today, racial distinctions continue to be popularly accepted as natural divisions of humanity with an implicit racial hierarchy that largely defines one's place in society. The accumulation of racially discriminatory treatment disproportionately sorts those stigmatized into the bottom strata of society even as it privileges others.[35] Moreover, this hierarchy is generally accepted as a natural aspect of society and thus may lead individuals to find their place in it regardless of direct discrimination. All this occurs despite a common ideology today that the United States is colorblind.[36] American society often stigmatizes those of Mexican origin, regardless of whether Mexicans are considered or consider themselves white, whether they are physically distinct, or whether they speak Spanish or have a Spanish surname or accent. This racialization also creates shared personal and political identities, which often become the basis for collective political action.

Whereas European ethnics assimilated into mainstream (white) American society, African Americans have long been racialized into a subordinate status and have thus been largely unable to assimilate. Although European immigrants were often racialized as nonwhite, they were largely accepted as white by the second or third generation, which allowed them to fully or nearly fully assimilate. For Mexican Americans, though, we find racialization especially in education well into the fourth generation, even though cultural and other forms of assimilation may occur.

Our data directly show that economic integration, the most desirable aspect of assimilation, stalls after the second generation while cultural, social and political assimilation occurs slowly but constantly over generations-since-immigration. As we will show, a sorting into the lower ranks of American society is mostly through public education. Moreover, persistently poor education over several generations-since-immigration largely accounts for the slow or interrupted assimilation of Mexican Americans in socioeconomic, cultural, residential, and other dimensions of life. Thus, poor educational opportunities, more than any other factor, exclude many Mexican Americans from successful integration into American society.

The Mexican American case shows that low education is not the only factor that slows assimilation. The size of the Mexican American population in the American Southwest and continuing immigration further promote residential isolation and ethnic persistence. These two factors make the Mexican American experience unlike that of African Americans and thus complicate our understanding of race in the United States. The large demographic presence and continuing immigration are products of a historical American dependence on Mexican labor. In addition, a continuing immigration of Mexican workers creates a largely Mexican context in many southwestern cities, such as Los Angeles and San Antonio, which regenerates ethnicity among Mexican Americans. These factors are likely to strengthen ethnic identity and ethnic behavior. One might argue that they also increase racialization by making the group more visible, ethnically distinct, and ethnically cohesive, as they respond politically to shared issues.

Assimilation and racialization may both be useful for understanding the Mexican American case, though neither term can be applied to Mexican Americans as they are to the European and African American experiences, respectively. Mexican Americans do show signs of assimilation on some dimensions but the process is inconsistent and slower than for European groups. Whereas European Americans assimilated on most dimensions by the third generation, Mexican Americans do not. Except for English acquisition, there are no signs of complete assimilation on any dimension even by the fourth generation, though loss of Spanish comes closest. Indeed, one can easily point to dis-assimilation, such as the increasing residential isolation from 1965 to 2000, or to the fact that education worsens from the second to the third generation-since-immigration. If assimilation happens slowly and direction is often uncertain, can we even call it assimilation?

On the other hand, should we refer to the Mexican American pattern of integration as racialized? If we limit ourselves to the African American model of racialization, then we probably should not. Mexican Americans out-marry and are residentially integrated much more than African Americans, and Mexican American ethnic and racial identities and political affiliations are also much more fluid than those of African Americans. Boundaries with other groups are far more permeable, a fluidity often determined by generation-since-immigration. To the extent it occurs, racialization may have quite different sources and current manifestations.

Racialization is thus more complex than it is for blacks in the United States. The idea of race also may arise from the changing nature of immigration. Also, racialization and the creation of racial stereotypes emerges in nineteenth-century conquest and continues afterward. The stigma is reinforced by the defining characteristics of Mexican immigration to the United States—low-wage labor and illegal status—and from the asymmetric relations between the two countries. Discrimination against Mexican Americans focuses particularly on the immigrants, but frequently extends to anyone of that origin. Substantial racial or ethnic boundaries may thus arise even for culturally assimilated U.S.-born Mexican Americans because of societal racism or nativism directed at Mexican immigrants but felt by all persons of Mexican origin.

In many ways we show the glass as both half full and half empty. Some Mexican Americans have done well and most do better now than their parents did when they were young in the 1960s. Those are signs of partial assimilation. However, they continue to lag well behind their Anglo counterparts, which probably also reflects a process of racialization. Our title *Generations of Exclusion* conveys the problematic fact that a large part of the Mexican American population has not been allowed the same opportunities that have been given to mainstream America and these disadvantages tend to get reproduced across generations. In a country as wealthy as the United States and one that holds fairness and equality as fundamental, how is it that many Mexican Americans fall behind? Even if we consider the assimilation stages that many believe are necessary for immigrant groups to become fully integrated, how then do we explain that the U.S.-born children of U.S.-born parents (and often U.S.-born grandparents) that are of Mexican origin have among the worst educational levels in the country? Moreover, their low educational status has kept them from becoming fully integrated in American society in many other ways. That, in our judgment, reveals a fundamental dilemma in a society that considers itself inclusive.

Organization of Chapters

We lay out our theoretical, methodological and historical background in chapters 2 to 4, our findings in chapters 5 to 10, and our conclusions in chap-

ter 11. Specifically, chapter 2 begins by reviewing theories and important findings that have guided scholarly understanding of ethnicity, assimilation, and race. It summarizes previous and current debates about the process of immigrant integration, including several versions of assimilation and racialization theories but also other perspectives about the role of national borders and state policies. It pays special attention to how Mexican origin persons might fit into these conceptual frameworks. Thus chapter 2 guides our analysis and sets the foundation for the rest of the book.

Chapter 3 describes our study design, including the sample, research methodology, and the longitudinal and intergenerational approach. In the interest of providing a transparent and scientifically based analysis, we specify our methodological steps. These, we believe, have yielded highly reliable data for our analysis. First, our study is based on a 1965 random sample of Mexican Americans in the two largest counties where they were represented. Second, we searched over a period of five years and eventually interviewed nearly 60 percent of the original sample (who were age fifty or younger in 1965) as well as a sample of their children. These data were then carefully weighted to compensate for respondents we were unable to locate and for self-selection bias in interviewing original respondents and their children. Chapter 3 is thus critical to demonstrating the strength and, particularly, the representativeness of our findings.

Chapter 4 provides context by exploring key trends in the history of Mexican Americans and by specifying how historians have come to view their position in American society. We begin with the 1830s, when Anglo Americans first began to dominate in northern Mexican lands and then launched a war to occupy them in the 1840s. Since that time, Mexicans were explicitly depicted as an inferior race—an idea that continued to sort the descendants of various waves of Mexican immigrants into subordinate positions throughout the twentieth century. At the same time, Americanization campaigns sought to assimilate Mexicans and Mexican Americans struggled for acceptance and equal opportunities. Legally, they first sought classification as white and then simply equal protection under the law, both to improve their lot in American society. Interestingly, their political and legal struggles often focused on education, which we find continues to be the central factor that keeps Mexican Americans disadvantaged. We emphasize how tensions between assimilation and racialization have contributed to the economic and political outcomes of Mexican Americans today.

Chapters 5 to 10 present the results of our survey and focus on intergenerational change from parents to children and over generations-since-immigration. We examine several dimensions involved in the integration experience of Mexican Americans, focusing on structural factors in chapters 5 through 7, and on culture, identity, and political issues in chapters 8 through 10.

Chapters 5 and 6 are concerned with the hierarchical or vertical issues of socioeconomic assimilation, which captures the core concerns of fairness and the American dream. Chapter 5, which explores education, turns out to be particularly important. It shows relatively low levels of education for Mexican Americans, which persist for generations beyond the immigration generation. Educational disadvantage or exclusion impedes social mobility and produces economic disadvantage for Mexican Americans throughout their adult lives, which we explore in chapter 6. In a stratified society such as the United States, socioeconomic status or hierarchical boundaries between ethnic and racial groups are arguably the most salient indicators of successful integration. In the case of Mexican Americans, their persistently low socioeconomic status reveals poor integration or assimilation.

Chapter 7 examines the social relations of Mexican Americans with other groups. We focus on intermarriage and residential segregation but also examine friendships and interracial attitudes. Mexican Americans are much more likely than African Americans to intermarry and live near whites and other groups, though rates of intermarriage and residential integration are far from random. Even into the fourth generation, many Mexican Americans continue to live in barrios and marry other Hispanics. Like status generally, exposure and relations outside the group are determined by education. The low levels of education that persist across generations impede this kind of assimilation.

Chapter 8 investigates cultural integration, particularly in language. Although nearly all Mexican Americans are proficient in English by the second generation, we discover substantial Spanish language persistence into the fourth generation. By the fifth generation, however, few children learn Spanish at home. The progressive loss of Spanish language proficiency over generations reveals a clear linear trend of linguistic assimilation, though a slow one relative to other groups. We find similar patterns regarding the naming of children in Spanish, a practice which does not require fluency in Spanish but does indicate ethnic attachment. We also find that Mexican Americans remain mostly Catholic by the fourth generation, though significant numbers have switched to being Protestant. Many also participate in ethnic culture, including celebrating holidays and listening to ethnic radio or music.

In chapter 9, we explore Mexican American identities or, more specifically, the subjective making of ethnic differentiation from the perspective of Mexican Americans. We examine how Mexican Americans self-identify and understand their position in American society. We examine whether a shared collective identity sets the population apart as a group. We find that, even into the fourth generation, identification with Mexicans or Mexican Americans remains strong, though for a minority, American identities have become stronger. Finally, racial identification as nonwhite

is strong and increases from parents to children. However, even among those who identify as white, perceptions of discrimination are common.

In chapter 10, we then examine politics and political identities, investigating whether Mexican Americans are assimilating politically and whether they can be seen as a voting bloc. We also explore what common interests might underlie political boundary formation, especially in regards to presumably ethnic issues like immigration, affirmative action and bilingualism. We find that Mexican Americans, especially immigrants, were almost entirely Democratic in the 1960s but that Democratic partisanship diminished notably by the 1990s, especially among later generations-since-immigration. We also find surprisingly strong support for immigration, affirmative action, and bilingualism even into the fourth generation, suggesting that generational differences have failed to create ethnic group cleavages in attitudes regarding ethnic issues. Mexican Americans are clearly pro-immigration compared to blacks and whites, regardless of whether they or their parents or even grandparents were immigrants.

We summarize the results in chapter 11 and propose a new understanding of Mexican integration in the United States. To what extent are existing theories of integration able to explain the case of Mexican Americans and what are the shortcomings of these theories? To what extent are Mexicans exceptional in the American experience? How does the Mexican American experience inform sociological theories of race and ethnicity? First we summarize the conclusions from the earlier chapters into an account of how those of Mexican origin become Americans, providing a mixed picture of assimilation (e.g., language) or persistent disadvantage (e.g., education). However, we also find large differences in outcomes among our respondents, some of which are explained by their varying experiences such as growing up in either San Antonio or Los Angeles. We differentiate interpretations based on historical or family generations from those based on generations-since-immigration. We also articulate an explanation premised on how significantly a century or more of American dependence on Mexican labor has contributed to the unique position of Mexican Americans. We then speculate about the future of Mexican Americans. Ultimately, we hope to have contributed not only to a sociological understanding of immigrant integration in general but also to the experience of the descendants of the longest and largest immigrant group in the United States.